

ders (tonight at 8, 9 and 10 on TNT) is a chance to educate Americans about their own history. To let them know that not all the soldiers and cowboys were white — to let them know that blacks made contributions as well.

The buffalo soldiers themselves were recruited into the Union army during the Civil War. It took an act of Congress in 1866 to allow black soldiers to continue to serve in the army, mostly in the cavalry on the frontier.

(The term "Buffalo Soldiers" originated with the Plains Indians, apparently because they believed the soldiers' hair resembled that of the buffalos.)

Cast members — including Danny Glover, Mykelti Williamson, Glynn Turman, Michael Warren and Carl Lumbly — agreed that bringing an ignored part of our history to light was a big reason they wanted to make the movie.

"It's a tragedy in this country's history that people don't know who these men were," said Glover, who not only stars as Sgt. Washington Wyatt but is one of the movie's executive producers. "Their story is really the story of African Americans, Native Americans and this country at a remarkable moment in time."

And "Buffalo Soldiers" is, in a way, a manner of righting past wrongs.

"The tragedy of history is taking various groups of people and saying, 'You had nothing to do with this,'" said Carl Lumbly, who stars as black/Seminole scout named John Horse. "Or, more criminally, 'Your contribution, because it doesn't fit with the picture that we would like to present to you, we can't use it.'"

Lumbly said his father educated him about the contributions of black Americans when he was a boy, but he found it difficult to share that knowledge.

"When I would go to school and

Scott Pierce
Deseret News television editor

repeat things, like the fact that the buffalo soldiers existed, I would have teachers — very often white teachers — tell me that an active imagination is, of course, a wonderful thing for a person to have," he said.

"One of the things I learned was what a disservice this country has done to society at large with not putting our history about the black cowboy (and) about the black military man," said Michael Warren, who stars as a soldier named Tockes. "Even when I was trying to do research, I'd find these books . . . were about the white officers. It's still very difficult to find thought-provoking, compelling pieces about the men."

"Buffalo Soldiers," on the other hand, is compelling viewing. It's more than a bit rough and violent, but so were the men and the times it portrays.

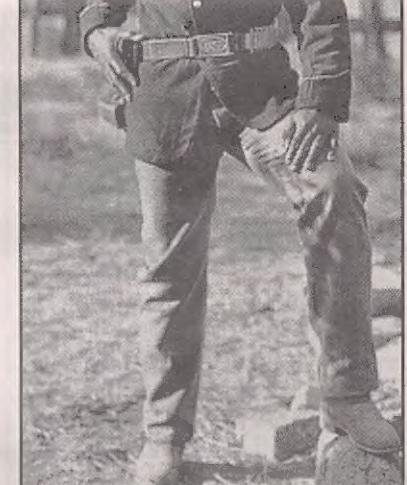
The quality of the telefilm raises the question of why it took so long to get it produced. "Buffalo Soldiers" has been kicking around Hollywood for 20 years in one form or another. At various times, it was supposed to be a theatrical film — but it never got made.

And director Charles Haid said there's a simple reason for that.

"If you go to the major studios — let's take a look and see how many films they've made about the African-American experience," he said. "Basically, they don't want to make movies about this particular experience because they don't think they'll sell tickets."

Haid went so far as to say there was "racism involved in that."

"I feel that it is a disservice that stories like this are not told because of the profit motive," he said. "But maybe we're getting over it now. This is going to bust a few fences, I'll guarantee you



Danny Glover is both the star and one of the executive producers of the made-for-cable movie.

that."

And it's not just the buffalo soldiers who get their due — so do the Indians. And that was something that was also important to the cast members, including Glynn Turman, who plays JoJu in the telefilm.

"I've watched this piece get kicked around for those 20 years in this town, and the thing that makes me so proud about being part of this particular version of 'Buffalo Soldiers' is the camaraderie, not only between the black soldiers and actors in the piece, but the wonderful, wonderful group of Native Americans in Arizona," Turman said, "who brought their own understanding, their own compassion and pride."

There's a parallel drawn between the African Americans and the Native Americans. Wyatt is as committed as the rest of the buffalo soldiers to bringing in the renegade Apaches, but he's aware of and tortured by the fact that the Indians are suffering the same fate as the blacks.

For Warren, the most touching moment comes when the buffalo soldiers ride through a town where



Black cavalrymen ride out to try to capture an Apache renegade in the cable movie "Buffalo Soldiers."

TELEVISION

'Buffalo Soldiers' is compelling — not to mention long overdue

On one level, TNT's "Buffalo Soldiers" operates as a rousing Western adventure — the story of a troop of African-American cavalrymen scouring the New Mexico territory in 1880 for a band of renegade Apaches and their chief, Victorio.

On another level, "Buffalo Sol-

